THE BOOK OF JONAH

TRANSLATED BY

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JONAH

Jonah rebels against his mission

1 1 The word of Yahweh was addressed to Jonah son of Amittai: ·"Up!" he said,
2 "Go to Nineveh, the great city, and inform them that their wickedness has
3 become known to me." ·Jonah decided to run away from Yahweh, and to go to
Tarshish.[a] He went down to Joppa and found a ship bound for Tarshish; he
paid his fare and went aboard, to go with them to Tarshish, to get away from
4 Yahweh. ·But Yahweh unleashed a violent wind on the sea, and there was such
5 a great storm at sea that the ship threatened to break up. ·The sailors took
fright, and each of them called on his own god, and to lighten the ship they
threw the cargo overboard. Jonah, however, had gone below and lain down in
6 the hold and fallen fast asleep. ·The boatswain came upon him and said, "What
do you mean by sleeping? Get up! Call on your god! Perhaps he will spare us
7 a thought, and not leave us to die." ·Then they said to each other, "Come on,
let us draw lots to find out who is responsible for bringing this evil on us."
8 So they cast lots, and the lot fell to Jonah. ·Then they said to him, "Tell us,
what is your business? Where do you come from? What is your country? What
9 is your nationality?" ·He replied, "I am a Hebrew, and I worship Yahweh, the
10 God of heaven, who made the sea and the land." ·The sailors were seized with
terror at this and said, "What have you done?" They knew that he was trying to
11 escape from Yahweh, because he had told them so. ·They then said, "What are
we to do with you. to make the sea grow calm for us?" For the sea was growing
12 rougher and rougher. ·He replied, "Take me and throw me into the sea, and
then it will grow calm for you. For I can see it is my fault this violent storm has
13 happened to you." ·The sailors rowed hard in an effort to reach the shore, but
14 in vain, since the sea grew still rougher for them. ·They then called on Yahweh
and said, "O Yahweh, do not let us perish for taking this man's life; do not hold
us guilty of innocent blood; for you, Yahweh, have acted as you have thought
15 right." ·And taking hold of Jonah they threw him into the sea; and the sea grew
16 calm again. ·At this the men were seized with dread of Yahweh; they offered
a sacrifice to Yahweh and made vows.

Jonah is saved

1 2 Yahweh had arranged that a great fish should be there to swallow Jonah;
and Jonah remained in the belly of the fish for three days and three nights.
2 From the belly of the fish he prayed to Yahweh, his God; he said:

3 "Out of my distress I cried to Yahweh
and he answered me;
from the belly of Sheol I cried,
and you have heard my voice.
4 You cast me into the abyss, into the heart of the sea,
and the flood surrounded me.
All your waves, your billows,
washed over me.

1 a. "The end of the world": Tartessos in Spain.

5 And I said: I am cast out
from your sight.
How shall I ever look again
on your holy Temple?
6 The waters surrounded me right to my throat,
the abyss was all around me.
The seaweed was wrapped around my head
7 at the roots of the mountains.
I went down into the countries underneath the earth,
to the peoples of the past.
But you lifted my life from the pit,
Yahweh, my God.
8 While my soul was fainting within me,
I remembered Yahweh,
and my prayer came before you
into your holy Temple.
9 Those who serve worthless idols
forfeit the grace that was theirs.

10 "But I, with a song of praise,
will sacrifice to you.
The vow I have made, I will fulfill.
Salvation comes from Yahweh."

11 Yahweh spoke to the fish, which then vomited Jonah on to the shore.

The conversion of Nineveh and God's pardon

1 3 The word of Yahweh was addressed a second time to Jonah: ·"Up!" he said,
2 "Go to Nineveh, the great city, and preach to them as I told you to." ·Jonah
3 set out and went to Nineveh in obedience to the word of Yahweh. Now Nineveh
4 was a city great beyond compare: it took three days to cross it. ·Jonah went
on into the city, making a day's journey. He preached in these words, "Only
5 forty days more and Nineveh is going to be destroyed." ·And the people of
Nineveh believed in God; they proclaimed a fast and put on sackcloth, from the
6 greatest to the least. ·The news reached the king of Nineveh, who rose from his
7 throne, took off his robe, put on sackcloth and sat down in ashes. ·A procla-
mation was then promulgated throughout Nineveh, by decree of the king and
his ministers, as follows: "Men and beasts, herds and flocks, are to taste nothing;
8 they must not eat, they must not drink water. ·All are to put on sackcloth and
call on God with all their might; and let everyone renounce his evil behavior
9 and the wicked things he has done. ·Who knows if God will not change his
mind and relent, if he will not renounce his burning wrath, so that we do not
10 perish?" ·God saw their efforts to renounce their evil behavior. And God relented:
he did not inflict on them the disaster which he had threatened.

The grievance of the prophet and God's answer

1 4 Jonah was very indignant at this; he fell into a rage. ·He prayed to Yahweh
2 and said, "Ah! Yahweh, is not this just as I said would happen when I was
still at home? That was why I went and fled to Tarshish: I knew that you were
a God of tenderness and compassion, slow to anger, rich in graciousness, relenting
3 from evil. ·So now Yahweh, please take away my life, for I might as well be dead
4 as go on living." ·Yahweh replied, "Are you right to be angry?" ·Jonah then
5 went out of the city and sat down to the east of the city. There he made himself
a shelter and sat under it in the shade, to see what would happen to the city.
6 Then Yahweh God arranged that a castor-oil plant should grow up over Jonah
to give shade for his head and soothe his ill-humor; Jonah was delighted with
7 the castor-oil plant. ·But at dawn the next day, God arranged that a worm

8 should attack the castor-oil plant—and it withered. ·Next, when the sun rose,
God arranged that there should be a scorching east wind; the sun beat down
so hard on Jonah's head that he was overcome and begged for death, saying,
9 "I might as well be dead as go on living." ·God said to Jonah, "Are you right
to be angry about the castor-oil plant?" He replied, "I have every right to be
10 angry, to the point of death." ·Yahweh replied, "You are only upset about
a castor-oil plant which cost you no labor, which you did not make grow,
11 which sprouted in a night and has perished in a night. ·And am I not to feel
sorry for Nineveh, the great city, in which there are more than a hundred and
twenty thousand people who cannot tell their right hand from their left, to say
nothing of all the animals?"